



### **Vice-President's Welcome**

If you haven't visited us already this season, what are you waiting for? We've been open since the end of March this season and have some excellent new displays (see the Convenor's report later in the Newsletter for more details) as well as "old favourites". Our dedicated band of Meet & Greet Volunteers, supported by Jo & Hannah, our 2024 Visitor experience Stewards, are on hand to welcome you to the Museum, answer any questions, and overall make sure you have the best visit possible.

Already this season the positive reviews are flooding in, through our visitor book in the museum as well as online on Google and Trip Advisor. I'm delighted to say we've also retained our 4-star rating from Visit Scotland this year, and our Meet & Greet staff were highly praised in the report. This will be the last year of Visit Scotland's star rating system following the announcement earlier in the year that the scheme will close in 2025. We will, of course, continue to strive to deliver a very high level of customer service for all of our visitors!

I wrote in the last newsletter that we hoped to submit our planning applications for the building proposals, to Moray Council in February of this year, but, unfortunately, we did not meet that target. A walk through in December with a potential construction partner raised several red flags and necessitated a rethink to our design. While I'm sure you'll share our frustration that we're behind schedule, I'm sure you'll also understand how essential it is that we get the design right. Given the scale of the project, it is crucial that we put the needs of the Museum, its Collection and its People at the forefront, but also that we think long-term and ensure that we will create an Elgin Museum that is fit for purpose for the future. We're *almost* there, and I'm confident that we *will* submit our planning applications this year – and that will be when the hard work starts!

As ever, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to everyone who supports Elgin Museum – our Volunteers and Staff, our Members, Supporters and Donors, and, of course, our Visitors. Hope to see you at the Museum or at one of our upcoming events soon.

**Claire Herbert, Vice President**

## **New Trustees**

We're delighted to welcome two new Trustees to The Moray Society Board: Eleanor Bradford and Andrew W. Henderson.



Eleanor is an award-winning communications specialist, columnist and former BBC correspondent, and is currently Head of Corporate Communications for SPEY media agency, managing external and internal relations for Scottish, UK and global companies.



Andrew is a local businessman, owner of Elgin Gallery, and a qualified archival framer.

We hope you'll join us in welcoming Eleanor and Andrew to the Board!

## **Trustee Vacancies**

The Moray Society also currently has a number of Trustee vacancies. We would like our Board to be representative of the community we serve, and actively encourage people of diverse age, gender, background and abilities to consider putting themselves forward. We're looking for individuals who can bring insights from a broad range of experience and backgrounds, have a strong interest in the culture and heritage of Moray, and who can help steer Elgin Museum and The Moray Society to become a more resilient and sustainable organisation. Find out more about the roles and how to apply on our website (<https://elginmuseum.org.uk/trustees/>).

## Convenor's Report – July 2024

Volunteers had a busy Spring preparing for the opening of the Museum over the Easter weekend. New (temporary) displays have been created to mark the 800th anniversary of Elgin Cathedral, 180-years since the publication of the seminal work on Devonian fish by Louis Agassiz, and the centenary of James Ramsay MacDonald's election as Britain's first Labour Prime Minister. We are extremely grateful to JRM's granddaughter and volunteer, Iona Kielhorn, for generously loaning material for the latter display. Other temporary exhibits include palaeontology, natural history, and toys and games through the ages so hopefully there is something new to interest everyone.



*Part of James Ramsay MacDonald display*

Our Meet & Greet team are now ensuring that visitors enjoy their time with us and we have been joined by (returning) staff member Jo Houlden and by Hannah Hamer who are employed as Seasonal Visitor Experience Stewards. Jo covers Weds-Thurs and Hannah Fri-Sun, ensuring that there is continuity for both volunteers and visitors. We have about 30 volunteers covering the 1-4 pm shifts when we are open and have successfully recruited several new volunteers this season. There's still time to get involved in this season's activities, though, so please get in touch if you would like more information.

I'm delighted that Stephanie Horner has become the (now not so new!) Volunteer Co-ordinator (Mentor) and she is doing a fab job supporting existing volunteers and welcoming new ones. We've instigated a new monthly Bulletin for volunteers this year so thank you to Dave Longstaff for editing this.

Although 'Meet & Greet' is the public face of the Museum, there are a raft of volunteers operating behind the scenes to ensure that operations run smoothly. Buildings volunteer David Bennet makes sure that we comply with H&S legislation so we can open safely. Weekly tests of the fire alarm and emergency lighting for example aren't things that most people think about, but which would be absolutely essential if anything went wrong. Our biggest concern at the moment is the state of the Rear Gallery roof which is continuing to let in water, and which is evident in the damp patches appearing on the ceiling tiles. David, in conjunction with architects LDN, is monitoring this but the increasingly frequent periods of prolonged rainfall are a worry.

Thanks are also due to the Inventory Team who are continuing to check that we know which objects are where and sorting out problems when things aren't as expected. We accept new donations that fit with our Collections Policy all the time, especially archaeological items received through Treasure Trove; although our Museum Assistant, Heather Townsend, is responsible for recording and labelling new acquisitions, volunteers decide what goes on display and then create the supporting information for visitors. Activity in the stores is never static so the team are constantly busy.

There are many more people that I could and should thank – especially the Management Committee – but thank you to everyone who shares their time and passion with Elgin Museum

**Alison Wright, Museum Convenor**

## **Archaeology - past, present, future**

### **Treasure Trove Review**

I wrote at length for the last newsletter about Elgin Museum and Treasure Trove. We made our formal contribution to the Review, which is being co-ordinated by the King's and Lord's Treasurer's Remembrancer (KLTR) but nothing has yet been published.

There have been further weekly meetings of the Scottish Government's Archaeology in Museums Working Group of which we are a member. The 'Before the Museum' project is strongly linked with the TT Unit and hence KLTR, but also with County Planning Departments and their archaeologists and the commercial archaeologists working on development projects.

My personal impression from these recent meetings, which focused on assemblages from development archaeology, is that they allowed all stakeholders to have their say; but it was no clearer how the consultants would produce a workable solution for receiving museums!

### **Treasure Trove allocations**

With any luck we should receive the 'stray finds' from metal detecting, allocated to us at the meeting in May, in time to get at least some of them on display before the end of the season. While they represent the generality of local finds, it is always a bonus when they add to our knowledge of existing sites and thus past life in Moray. Gold posy rings are popular with Museum visitors, and we'll have one from Alves with the inscription: 'I fancie non but the alon'. New sites producing TT material relating to their occupation are Rothes Castle (5 items) and Auchindoun Castle (281 items including a complete gold finger ring of likely Post Medieval date, c.1600-1800CE and a fragment of a hand cannon).

### **Picts**

An Aberdeen MA student is carrying out research into people's perception of the Picts in response to visits to museums or events featuring the Picts. Professor Gordon Noble, familiar locally for his excavations at Burghead, is one of her supervisors. She spent 2 days in the Museum interviewing visitors; fortunately, the 2<sup>nd</sup> day was more productive. A poster has been left in the Museum with a QR code for anyone to respond to her questionnaire.

Her project should be of value to us as it explores whether or not a museum's displays and interpretation are engaging, accurate and learning experiences and this in turn can give us feedback on our effectiveness.

### **Covesea Caves**

Ian Armit and Lindsey Büster, York University will be excavating again, 5<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> August. Ian will give a lecture in the Museum on 16<sup>th</sup> August, and hopefully will have some artefacts to show us from previous and this year's excavations.

### **Peru update**

Not exactly archaeology, but convenient to mention here. At the EGM of The Moray Society on 20<sup>th</sup> May, the proposal was considered for the repatriation and restitution of the Peruvian mummified young woman (ELGNM 1846.1), delegating decision making to The Moray Society Board (under guidance from the Museum's Advisory Group) on the return of her remains. This was carried by 93% of the votes received on the principle that this will be done on the basis of proper respect and that it is not an onerous financial burden on The Moray Society.

The timing related to the convenience of having this settled with MS members when an EGM was already required for other issues. (Deaccessions from the Museum's collections require 75% of those voting to be in favour.)

The ball is in Peru's court. JT had heard nothing in response to emails since October, and in May via another contact in the Peruvian Embassy, she discovered our original contact had returned to Peru. His successor did respond to JT's invitation to continue the discussion (which centres on whether or not the people of her Aymaran culture are involved in the decision making, information required before we can convene a meeting of our Advisory Group), but nothing more heard yet.

### **Janet Trythall, Archaeology Volunteer**

### **NESHN Training Event**

In May 2024 the North East of Scotland Heritage Network hosted a course on Collection Care which was led by Richard Aitken from the Highland Archive Service. Attendees were from 9 Heritage bodies in North East Scotland, including Elgin Museum (represented by Stewart Halkett, Elgin Museum Volunteer).

The event dealt with books, maps, correspondence, photographs, posters, documents and drawings, looking at the problems which might affect them and whether and how to conserve the objects and how to store and display them. Particular pieces of advice were:

- Nitrile gloves are essential if handling photographs.
- Don't use ordinary Sellotape on paper artefacts, it discolours paper. Archival acid free adhesive tape can be used to repair/attach loose paper covers if essential.
- Use only brass paperclips, not steel as steel might rust and discolour paper.

- A building's temperature, humidity, light levels and dust can affect the conservation of collections. Insects like high temperatures and high humidity and might also like eating nor damaging archives.
- Protect documents, photos, paper etc from direct sunlight or UV light.
- Don't write on the back of photos with biro, or allow biro ink near the photo's surface, only write with a pencil near photos.
- A "Smoke Sponge" will absorb dust and soot from the surface of paper.
- The information and advice from the training session could be helpful for looking after and conserving books, paper documents etc you might have at home, as well as in a museum.

The course was very useful in explaining the problems which can affect archives and gave some practical tips on how to reduce or eliminate potential problems. Participants had brought along various examples of archives which were damaged or at risk and received guidance on how to deal with them

**Stewart Halkett, Volunteer**

### **NESHN Conference - June 2024**

Janet and Alison attended a conference organised by the North-East Scotland Heritage network at the University of Aberdeen. Held over a day-and-a-half, delegates explored topics of shared interest ranging from writing great interpretative text, running an exhibition on a shoestring, environmental monitoring through to disaster management. There were also sessions on fundraising and volunteer co-ordination and, as many of the talks ran in parallel, Janet and Alison split their time to ensure that Elgin Museum was represented at all the sessions. Although the talks were interesting, it was also useful to meet delegates from other organisations: members of the network include accredited museums but also local family history societies, for example, and thus the ~50 participants were a mix of professional staff and volunteers. Many of the same concerns were evident across the network, especially regarding finance, and it's clear that running any heritage organisation is a challenge. Museums Galleries Scotland funded the conference as part of their commitment to supporting regional forums.

### **Elgin Museum Geology Group Summer Report**

The Geology Group recently took part in the Moray Walking and Outdoor Festival, leading a group along the coastline at Hopeman, exploring the geology hiding in plain sight. Thankfully our prayers to the weather gods were successful and they managed to have the one dry day of the week for their trip. *Hopeman: Fossil dunes and trackways* offered an opportunity to examine features of the Late Permian Hopeman Sandstone formation, including fossilised dunes and animal trackways. The event was well received, and a repeat performance has already been requested! Feedback from one satisfied customer:



*“It was a thoroughly fascinating day and Alison and Dave were great guides. I had a brilliant time and loved all the textures and stories we found in the Hopeman Sandstone”.*



*Dave with the group at Daisy Rock*

### **Gordonia**

Friend of Elgin Museum Hady George, University of Bristol, has just published his findings from the high-resolution CT scanning of the Clashach block (ELGNM 1999.5.1) that he undertook in 2021. His MSc research has provided new data about both the external and internal anatomy of the dicynodont skull. Interestingly, one of his main findings is that our *Gordonia* specimen is closely related to the Chinese species *Jimusaria*, suggesting that they share a common ancestor. He was also able to define the size of the brain case relative to the body size and to determine that it has an unusually large pineal body, which is the gland that secretes melatonin to regulate the cycle of sleeping/wakefulness in response to light conditions. If you'd like to find out more you can read Hady's paper for free online in the Zoological Journal (<https://academic.oup.com/zoolinnear/advance-article/doi/10.1093/zoolinnear/zlae065/7694288>).



Hady George working with *Gordonia* in the Museum

**Dave Longstaff & Alison Wright, Geology Group July 2024**

## New Acquisition



Google Map image showing probable original location of sign

A visit to Nairn Museum following up a fossil enquiry ended up with Elgin Museum being offered an old road sign which had been languishing in their stores for many years. The Elgin Museum Collection Management Group almost immediately agreed that the sign would be a useful addition to our collection. Numerous responses to a question posted onto 'Elgin Past and Present' Facebook page has enabled us to locate the sign's original location. It is very probable the sign's original location was from the junction of a minor, now disused, road leading south from the A96 on the western side of Carden Hill. Unfortunately Nairn Museum don't have any particular records of the object which would give information on how, or why, they acquired the sign.

**Dave Longstaff, Volunteer**

## What's On at Elgin Museum

We have some great events coming up over the summer, suitable for all ages!

**The BIG Elgin Cathedral LEGO™ Build, Friday 9th and Saturday 10th August, 6pm – 7pm**



In association with the Historic Environment Scotland Learning team, we're hosting a series of workshops to build a replica of Elgin Cathedral to celebrate its 800th anniversary. All of the workshops have sold out...but we have added two additional evening sessions exclusively to friends and supporters of Elgin Museum! You'll learn about architecture and construction and use real plans and drawings to work out the scale of the model. Suitable for adults and children aged 8yrs+.

The workshops are free, but must be booked online at:

[www.elgin-museum.arttickets.org.uk/](http://www.elgin-museum.arttickets.org.uk/)



## Evening Talks

**Covesea Caves: an archaeology update: A talk by Prof. Ian Armit, University of York, Friday 16th August 2024 at 7 pm**



Ian Armit is back this summer excavating at Covesea. Now a professor at the University of York, his archaeology career began in Scotland with a special interest in the Iron Age. With Dr Lindsey Buster, he published their previous work at Covesea in 'Darkness Visible'

**Treasures of Moray: What's new with Moray Finds? A talk by Dr George Prew, Treasure Trove Unit, Friday 20th September 2024 at 7 pm**

This talk by Treasure Trove Officer Dr George Prew gives a quick overview of how the Treasure Trove system works, what the Treasure Trove Unit does, who they are and some of the big changes to the unit over the last year, before showing and talking through particularly interesting cases of objects which have come through the process from Moray in the last few years.



Treasure  
Trove

*Tickets for talks (including free tickets) must be booked in advance: Adult tickets £4, Students £2, Moray Society members free.*

*All Moray Society members can attend our lectures for free as part of their membership. All tickets (including free tickets) must be booked in advance via our online ticketing website – go to the "What's On" page of our website and follow the link to book:*

*<https://elginmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/>*

## Save the Date!

Some dates for the diary - the following events are not available for booking yet, but please "save the date" and will share with you in due course once bookings are open.

### **Saturday 7th September 2024 – various times**

Moray Doors Open Days

Behind the Scenes at Elgin Museum – store tours. Tours will run at 10.30 am and 11.30 am

Elgin Museum Building Tour Inside & Our: history and future plans. This tour will start at 5 pm

Places will be limited on Doors Open Days tours and will need to be booked in advance.

### **Friday 27th September 2024 at 7 pm**

Scotland beneath the Surface: a subterranean odyssey exploring the natural and man-made heritage under our feet: A talk by L. Bruce Keith. Following on from his talk on Scottish Bridges, and last year's talk on Milestones, Bruce Keith returns to share with us his later research project focusing on underground structures.

## **The Moray Society Prize Draw**

The Prize Draw has been running since April 2000 and has raised over £8000 for Elgin Museum. This helps with the day to day running costs and the Society is very grateful for this income. Sales of the Draw tickets are strictly limited to Moray Society members and income from the sale of tickets is paid directly into the Moray Society Prize Draw account. All proceeds are used for the exclusive benefit of the Moray Society.

Tickets are priced at £10 each per annum and are valid for 4 draws. Draws are held quarterly with prizes of £25, £15 and £10 respectively for the first 3 numbers drawn, in sequence, at each draw. These prizes are based on an income of £1000 in tickets sold ie. 100 tickets. Many members have annual standing orders with their banks, which greatly reduces our costs. Standing orders can only be amended or cancelled by the persons concerned. Mandates for standing orders are available from the Museum, or myself, on request. Cash, or cheques made payable to the Moray Society Prize Draw, are also accepted. There is no limit imposed by the Society on the number of tickets that may be held by individual members. Please contact me at the museum for queries about the draw or for application forms.

Mary Shand (Prize Draw Organiser) Museum Tel. No. 01343 543675

Email [curator@elginmuseum.org.uk](mailto:curator@elginmuseum.org.uk)

### **Moray Society Prize Draw**

Please allocate me ..... tickets in the Moray Society Prize Draw @ £10 each.

\*I enclose my payment of £ ..... \*Please forward me a standing order mandate \*Delete as appropriate

Name .....

Address .....

Post Code .....

Email address .....

## **Elgin Visit**

Following a visit to the Museum a couple of weeks ago, during which they were impressed by our displays, one of our visitors was impressed enough to pen a poem about ourselves and Moray Motor Museum.

## **Elgin Museums**

Fine exhibits are on display  
For us to examine today:  
An old boat, the Spey coracle,  
Dinosaurs are a spectacle,  
Roman silver coins and carved stones,  
A gruesome coffin full of bones.

I really do enjoy my car,  
Would love to drive it very far.  
Museums celebrate the past  
But fossil fuels will not last.

The rich - powerful and greedy;  
The poor - struggling and needy.  
Life for the poor was so cruel:  
They ate little more than gruel.  
The rich ate meat three times a day.  
And the class gap persists today.

Witches were feared and made to burn,  
Now the immigrants have their turn.  
History should expose the past,  
Ensure that prejudice won't last.

Dr Gaye Manwaring MBE  
(July 2024)



## **Become a Friend of Elgin Museum – join The Moray Society!**

Membership of The Moray Society is open to anyone who is interested in helping Elgin Museum in its aim to help promote the heritage of Elgin and Moray. All subscriptions received go towards the running of Elgin Museum, helping to fund activities and exhibitions as well as ensuring the Museum can stay open!

Current subscription rates are given below. If you are interested in joining, or have any queries, please contact Bill Dalgarno, Membership Secretary, by email at: [curator@elginmuseum.org.uk](mailto:curator@elginmuseum.org.uk)

You can also find membership applications on Elgin Museum website.

### **Current Subscription Rates – Special Offer for New Members!**

Adult (over 25): £15 per annum (each member), followed £25 p/a (from January 2025) if paid by standing order (or £30 p/a if not paid by standing order)

Family (2 or more adults and children): £25 per annum, followed by £37.50 p/a (from January 2025) if paid by standing order (or £45 p/a if not paid by standing order)

Adult (18 – 25): FREE

Junior Member/Young Marvels Membership (under 18): FREE

Corporate Membership: £500 (minimum contribution)

Life Member: £500 single payment

### **Membership Benefits**

- Free admission to Moray Society lectures and reduced admission to conferences
- A regular copy of the Society newsletter
- Opportunity to join the Moray Society Prize Draw
- Access to the museum and its research opportunities







**THE MORAY  
SOCIETY**  

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**ELGIN  
MUSEUM**

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*Newsletter editor: Bill Dalgarno, Trustee and Volunteer*